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Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

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Chapter I
Introduction

1. By its resolution 70/22, the General Assembly, having taken note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean (A/70/29), requested the Chair of the Committee to continue his informal consultations with the members of the Committee and to report through the Committee to the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Committee held its formal session (457th meeting) on 10 July 2017 at United Nations Headquarters. The Chair also held a number of consultations and meetings during 2017.

3. At the 457th meeting, the following delegations made statements in the general discussion under agenda item 4: Australia, India, Indonesia, Russian Federation, China, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

4. The Committee is composed of the following States:

(a) 43 members:

Australia
Bangladesh
Bulgaria
Canada
China
Djibouti
Egypt
Ethiopia
Germany
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Italy
Japan
Kenya
Liberia
Madagascar
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Mozambique
Netherlands
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Poland
Romania
Russian Federation
Seychelles
Singapore
Somalia
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Thailand
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
United Republic of Tanzania
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

(b) Observers:

Nepal

South Africa

Sweden

5. Following elections to fill vacancies in the Bureau, the officers of the Committee were as follows:

Chair:

Amrith Rohan Perera (Sri Lanka)

Vice-Chairs:

Darren Hansen (Australia)
Ahmad Shaleh Bawazir (Indonesia)
Carlos Manuel Da Costa (Mozambique)

Rapporteur:

Lalaina Josie Brigitte Raharimboahangy (Madagascar)

Chapter II
Work of the Committee in 2017

A. Adoption of the agenda

6. At its 457th meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document A/AC.159/L.147, which read as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 70/22.
5. Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.
6. Other matters.

B. Report of the Chair

7. At its 457th meeting, the Committee considered agenda item 4, concerning the report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 70/22. The Chair made the following comprehensive statement on his consultations:

> "Excellencies, distinguished members of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean,
>
> "As you would recall, in 1971, the General Assembly declared the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace by its resolution 2832 (XXVI). In its resolution 2992 (XXVII), adopted a year later, the Assembly provided for practical measures to further the objectives of the 1971 declaration by establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. They reflect the endeavours of the States and the peoples of the Indian Ocean region to preserve their common interests in enhancing peace, security and stability in the region.
>
> "The beginnings of the Indian Ocean maritime trade go as far back as 5,000 years, initially with trading among coastal settlements. The political powers that emerged from time to time in the cusp of the Indian Ocean were fundamentally committed to maritime trade.
>
> "The Indian Ocean region is characterized by a remarkable diversity in terms of economic strength, languages and cultures. The Indian Ocean is a lifeline for the littoral and hinterland States, and is vital for their security and sustainable economic growth.
>
> "Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
>
> "We all are aware that the concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace was conceived in a different political environment, one of the possible escalation of the arms race among great powers into the Indian Ocean region, with the potential to pose a serious threat to the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region. Today, we meet in a different global environment in a multipolar world and an environment in which the geopolitical realities have

changed from that which prevailed when the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean was first established.

"While we recognize this reality, it is, however, important to realize that the threats to peace and security in the Indian Ocean region have not completely disappeared, but are only undergoing a certain transformation. While the security concerns of the 1970s were consequent to, and emanated from, the more traditional sources of inter-State rivalries, of which the nuclear arms race was paramount, today the threats in the Indian region originate from non-traditional sources of a diverse nature. They include the phenomena of terrorism and piracy resorted to by non-State actors, as well as human trafficking, drug smuggling, trafficking of weapons and the like, with their interlinkages, resorted to by organized networks. The threat posed to the marine environment by marine pollution and climate change and the harmful effects on marine resources of illegal unreported and unregulated fishing activities also need to be addressed.

"In the context of these continuing and grave threats emanating from non-traditional sources, the work of the Committee continues to remain pertinent if we are to ensure regional peace and security and the economic growth of the Indian Ocean region.

"As mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/22 of 11 December 2015, I undertook a series of informal consultations to ascertain the views of Member States on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, and in particular, its future direction. In the course of those consultations I was able to gather the sense that the core elements of the mandate of the Committee continue to be very much relevant today, in the light of new threats and challenges. The view was clearly expressed that the new areas of concern in the Indian Ocean region that have surfaced since the original mandate of this Committee require attention as we charter the future direction of our work. It was considered that a possible review of the current mandate of the Committee would be pertinent in this context.

"It requires no emphasis that maritime safety and security is a vital area that needs continuing attention, as it is the Indian Ocean that binds the Member States and provides a lifeline for trade which is vital for the economic development of the region. The need to reinvigorate the work of the Committee, taking into account the new issues of concern, was certainly underlined during the consultations.

"In addressing the contemporary issues in the Indian Ocean region, it is particularly important to take note also of the emergence of organizations, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association, which was formed to ensure greater cooperation among States in the Indian Ocean region. It was considered that the Ad Hoc Committee could provide a useful forum to give voice to the Association within the United Nations system and that a whole range of issues, including the blue economy, could be looked at in that context.

"This has particular significance in enhancing cooperation in maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean. It is in recognition of this important development that the General Assembly, in its resolution 70/22, adopted during the seventieth session, noted the initiatives taken by countries of the region to promote cooperation, in particular economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean area, and the possible contribution of such initiatives to the overall objectives of a zone of peace.

"The outcome of the recent oceans conference further expanded and consolidated the importance of the preservation of the oceans and the marine environment as an essential prerequisite for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The dire condition of the oceans, as discussed during the historic oceans conference, enhances the urgency of our task.

"The creation of a sustainable ocean economy; new blue industries including off-shore renewables, marine technologies and aquacultures; clean-up; and implementation of regenerative processes to combat climate change will help to initiate a zone of economic progress that will provide the stability that accelerates rapid environmental improvement and ensures international peace and security.

"Environmental interconnectivity can provide an opportunity for peacekeeping, peacemaking and development that will bring multiple benefits to the region.

"The Indian Ocean provides employment, food, avenues of trade and commerce to all our nations. Therefore new realities and challenges need to be thoughtfully considered.

"I would encourage the continuous engagement of Member States in the process of determining the future direction of our work, taking the above into account, thorough the adoption of a consensual approach to the issues at hand.

"Distinguished members of the Ad Hoc Committee,

"During my consultations, it was underlined that in chartering the future direction of the work of this Committee, there are two factors that require our close attention:

"(a) In the light of current developments, is there a need for a review of the mandate, to take into account current global threats and challenges as well as opportunities in the Indian Ocean region?

"(b) Whether it is necessary to present a resolution at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, so that the Ad Hoc Committee could meet as and when required when the time is opportune. Such an interval could perhaps provide Member States adequate time to consult on the question of the possible review of the mandate, to take on board current realities.

"It is my expectation that this afternoon you will give your particular attention in your interventions to these two options and also to any other ideas and strategies you may have on how the work of the committee could be moved forward with a view to charting our future course of action.

"It is my intention to carry out the widest possible consultations with all Member States, keeping these elements in mind, in order to report to the General Assembly at the forthcoming seventy-second session."

8. During the meeting, an exchange of views was held on a range of issues relating to the work of the Committee.

9. The Committee reaffirmed the continuing relevance of its mandate in the light of new threats and challenges confronting the region. The importance of such organizations as the Indian Ocean Rim Association was viewed as being of particular significance in enhancing cooperation in maritime safety and security. The need for Member States to continue their engagement in the process was also emphasized, with a view to determining the future direction of the work of the

Committee. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

10. The Committee remained convinced that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users in the work of the Committee was important and would assist the progress of a mutually beneficial dialogue aimed at developing conditions of peace, security and stability in the region.

C. Recommendations

11. The Chair proposed that the mandate of the Committee, (based on the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace) could be revised, subject to the consensus of the Committee, and updated to reflect current realities and convergent interests in the region. The Committee decided that the Chair should undertake further consultations and make a proposal to the Committee in that regard, which would be taken up by the Committee at its next session.

D. Adoption of the report of the Committee

12. At the 457th meeting, the Rapporteur introduced the draft report of the Committee.

13. At the same meeting, the Chair informed the members of the Committee of his intention to hold informal consultations concerning the text of the draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

14. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted its report.

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